

Democratic Decay Resource (DEM-DEC): Second Monthly Bibliography Update – September 2018

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The DEM-DEC Bibliography

The DEM-DEC Bibliography is provided on the Democratic Decay Resource (DEM-DEC) at www.democratic-decay.org, which was launched on 25 June 2018 by [Dr Tom Gerald Daly \(Melbourne Law School\)](#) and is supported by a range of partners, including Verfassungsblog (see the list of partners [here](#)). DEM-DEC aims to provide useful information to academics and policymakers concerned with the creeping deterioration of democratic rule worldwide.

The [main Bibliography](#) (finalised on 24 June 2018) presents a global range of research on democratic decay. It has a strong focus on research by public lawyers – spanning constitutional, international and transnational law – but also includes key research from political science, as well as policy texts.

Updates to the Bibliography will be issued on the first Monday of each month, based on new publications and suggestions from users of DEM-DEC. All updates should be read in conjunction with the main bibliography on DEM-DEC.

Second monthly update since DEM-DEC was launched

This second monthly update provided was issued on 3 September 2018 and is [now available on DEM-DEC](#).

Additions in the September Update include:

- New Research Worldwide from August 2018
- Key Items from earlier in 2018 and late 2017
- A significant list of additions suggested by DEM-DEC Users
- Forthcoming Research

Identifying Themes

Each monthly bibliography update will include a section identifying themes from the update. The aim is simply to provide ‘added value’ by helping users to navigate the update, and to provide some limited commentary, especially on very recent

research. Although it is impossible to capture every dimension of the issues covered in this Update, six key themes emerge from this update.

1 Global Takes on Democratic Decay

[‘Constitutional Democracy in Crisis?’](#), a new edited collection produced by Mark Graber, Sandy Levinson and Mark Tushnet (published 23 August 2018 and discussed by Graber in a recent [Verfassungsblog post](#)), examines whether liberal democracy is under threat, and the nature of the threats it faces. With almost 40 chapters, the collection has a broad thematic and geographic range. The introduction and Part I present broad theoretical, conceptual, and historical analysis. Part II addresses specific countries and regions, ranging from long-established democracies (e.g. USA, France), to younger democracies (e.g. Hungary, South Africa), to entire world regions (e.g. Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa). Parts III and IV focus on selected themes, including religion, populism, the climate crisis, and the crumbling of European democracy. It is a highly useful collection, which also sets the scene for potential future collections (for instance, states such as Japan and Brazil, sub-regions such as Scandinavia, and themes such as religion deserve additional attention). [‘Democracy Under Threat’](#) – an edited collection from 2017 produced by Surendra Munshi, and suggested for addition to this Update by a DEM-DEC user – provides a similarly expansive take on global threats to democracy from the perspective of sociologists, political scientists, and policymakers. The two collections can be read as companion pieces, and in their considered, evidence-based approach, present useful correctives to the more sensationalist takes on the subject (see e.g. [a recent book on the ‘suicide of the West’](#) (April 2018) by Jonah Goldberg).

2 What ‘Counts’ as Democratic Decay?

The above collections raise a key question: whether what is under discussion relates to one broad phenomenon, or various related phenomena. Looking to the collection on ‘Constitutional Democracy in Crisis?’ above, for instance, can the constitutional crisis in the UK occasioned by Brexit be set beside the sophisticated dismantling of democratic rule in Hungary, or the shift to strongman rule in Turkey? Can the diffuse threats to democratic rule in the USA – of which President Trump is but one symptom – be analogised to the executive-led assault on democracy in Poland? It is also useful to consider where the bounds of ‘democratic decay’ lie: should it be restricted solely to countries that have reached, and maintained, an appreciable and measurable level of democratic progress for a significant period of time, or should we take the more capacious approach of including any rollback of democratic freedoms in a given state? Is it always easy to draw a dividing line between a failed (or faltering) democratisation process and a decay of a functioning democracy? The DEM-DEC Bibliography tends toward a focus on states that have been considered ‘consolidated’ democracies, but also seeks to be inclusive. For instance, among the additions suggested by DEM-DEC users include a conference

paper by Abdurrachman Satrio on ‘constitutional retrogression’ in Indonesia, and a [special issue of the *Comparative Politics* journal](#) (April 2018) on the nature of governance in contemporary Russia and how democracy in Russia was eroded in that state. These additions raise a central question, as to

3 Understanding Democratic Resilience

Two central preoccupations in the emerging ‘democratic decay’ research field are, first, the attempt to identify and anatomise threats to democratic governance and, second, the fact that key sentinels designed to operate as bulwarks against such threats (e.g. courts) have either provided little safeguard, or have even been co-opted as part of the project to dismantle democracy. Somewhat less attention has been paid to how, precisely, a democratic system can effectively protect itself. A number of items in this Update address this question squarely. In their chapter on Canada in the collection ‘Constitutional Democracy in Crisis?’, Richard Albert and Michael Pal examine this question under the rubric ‘democratic resilience’. More specifically, Mihaela #erban in the [forthcoming issue of *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*](#) (September 2018) focuses on legal mobilisation and ‘adversarial legalism’ to push back against illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe; while in a [recent issue of *Comparative Politics*](#) (July 2018), Laura Gamboa addresses strategies against democratic erosion in Venezuela and Colombia, highlighting how the opposition in each state took different approaches to threats from problematic presidents. Finally, [Cass Sunstein’s 2017 citizen’s guide to impeachment](#), suggested for addition by a DEM-DEC user, underlines the need to marry expert knowledge and citizen education and engagement in the pushback against threats to democratic rule.

4 Taking Greater Care in Using Populism as a Concept

In a highly important article in [Comparative Political Studies \(published on 26 July 2018\)](#), Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser address the fact that scholars are increasingly employing the concept of populism to explain recent events such as the election of President Trump and the UK’s vote to leave the EU. They identify two shortcomings in the contemporary use of populism as a concept: first, that new populism scholars often fail to draw on, and build on existing populism scholarship; and second, that established comparative populism scholars tend to stay within the confines of their research field and do not attempt to link their work to other academic fields. The article is a must read for any scholar working on democratic decay, given the prevalence of the concept, and the laxity in how it is employed. As the authors state:

it is crucial that scholars work with clear definitions of populism and delimit the boundaries of the phenomenon. Instead of developing ad hoc concepts, which treat the specificities of national or regional manifestations of populism as generalizable, they should incorporate some of the lessons that the existing scholarship offers us.

(Note: For more discussion of concepts, see the [Concept Index](#) on DEM-DEC).

5 Populism and Feminism

Rob Kroes [in a recent issue of Society](#) (February 2018) – suggested for addition by a DEM-DEC user – focuses on the links between populism and feminism, with particular reference to the US context and the defeat of Hillary Clinton by Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election. For Kroes, it is not helpful to see populism and feminism as mutually exclusive categories, highlighting the historical experience of what might be termed ‘good populism’ in the USA (‘good populism’ is discussed in the [DEM-DEC Concept Index](#), ‘Populism’ entry). Kroes’ piece also serves as a useful focal piece for considering the link between feminism and ‘negative’ (or authoritarian) populism; as evidenced in, for instance, attempts to roll back reproductive rights in Poland, or the recent all-male raft of 21 judicial appointments in Italy (see a [recent IACL-AIDC Blog post](#) on the subject).

6 The Public Preference for Democracy

A number of items in this Update address public faith in democratic rule—one of the central concerns in the growing literature on democratic decay. For instance, Frank Furedi’s 2017 book on ‘Populism and the European Culture Wars’ – suggested for addition by a DEM-DEC user – captures a strong strain of thought in arguing that “the current outburst of anti-populist anxiety is symptomatic of a loss of faith in democracy and in the ability of the demos to assume the role of responsible citizens.” Other items present differing additional perspectives: [Natalia Wenzell Letsa and Martha Wilfahrt](#) in *Comparative Politics* (January 2018), on the basis of public opinion data from tens of thousands of respondents in authoritarian regimes worldwide make the case that all categories of respondent—rich and poor alike—tend to prefer democracy to autocratic rule. A separate article by [Yichen Guan in Democratization](#) (March 2018) analyses how popular demands for democracy exist under a ‘resilient authoritarian’ system such as China that produces economic development. However, [Tom Ulbricht in Comparative Political Studies](#) (May 2018) argues that the ambiguity of the term ‘democracy’ complicates assessment of public support for democracy and that popular support for representative democracy has tended to be overstated.

Suggest Additions and Subscribe to the Mailing List

You can suggest additions for the next Update (to be issued on 1 October 2018) by filling out the [form on DEM-DEC](#), or by emailing directly at democraticdecay@gmail.com.

You can also Subscribe to the DEM-DEC mailing list to receive updates of all new additions to the Resource by using the Subscription button on the [DEM-DEC homepage](#) (below the introduction video) or by e-mailing democraticdecay@gmail.com.

